

# Supervisor Romaine Presents State of the Town Address "Move Brookhaven Forward"

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**Farmingville, NY** - On March 26, Brookhaven Town Supervisor Ed Romaine delivered his first "State of the Town" address in the second floor auditorium at Town Hall. In his address, the Supervisor spoke of the first four months that he has been in office and renewed his commitment to control spending, hold the line on taxes and develop a multi-year plan to create a structurally balanced budget by the year 2016. He also spoke of his successful efforts to eliminate more than \$15 million in proposed pipeline debt and other debt refinancing that enabled the Town to maintain its AA+ bond rating while other municipalities had their bond ratings downgraded. **Click here to watch and/or download the speech.**

The Supervisor proposed additional cost cutting and deficit reducing initiatives, including:

- A move toward longer-term bonds where payments include both interest and principal.
- Selling non-performing, non-essential assets, such as the old Town Hall in Patchogue.
- A reduction in overtime expenses, non-essential staff, and the Town's vehicle fleet.
- The leasing of space in Town Hall.
- Scaling back, eliminating, or rescheduling to future years of near-term capital projects, as well as a number of other cost-saving measures.
- Collaborating on shared services with the County as a way of reducing expenses for both municipalities.

The Supervisor asked the members of the Town Board to work with him in putting forth additional proposals to reduce the Town's deficit, saying that the "budgetary difficulties occurred over several years, and will take several years to resolve; but resolve them we must."

## **Green Energy, Recycling and Waste Management**

While he stressed the importance of cost cutting and deficit reduction, the Supervisor also noted a revenue generating initiative that will benefit not only the Town's budget, but the environment as well. The innovative Green Energy Project, which was recently approved by the Town Board, is the largest renewable energy project on Long Island. When complete, it could generate up to \$2.5 million each year for the town and produce 50 mega watts AC of electricity, capable of lighting 8,400 homes. The project includes solar and wind arrays on up to 15 Town properties and will prevent nearly 54,000 tons of harmful pollutants from entering our atmosphere annually. The project will also create 675 construction jobs.

Other Green initiatives include:

- Upgrading the recycling center and a move to single stream recycling in 2014. This will increase recycling by 20%, improve efficiency and reduce the Town's cost of waste disposal.
- A recent law that gives tax exemptions for new residential and commercial construction, or improvements that meet qualified green building certification known as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design).
- The Town's new Wind and Solar codes.
- A proposed code to encourage the use of geo-thermal energy sources.
- Proposal to implement an energy audit for several town buildings in an effort to save money and improve energy efficiency.

In regard to the Landfill, the Supervisor repeated that he is not in support of raising the height, which was proposed by the previous administration. He will establish a task force of experts in solid waste management to begin the process of migrating to a new, environmentally sound and profitable waste management methodology.

### **Open Space**

The open space priorities that the Supervisor established while serving as a County Legislator will continue as he strives to preserve key environmental parcels throughout the Town that avoid overdevelopment and traffic congestion. This includes:

- When a more intensive land use is undertaken, the developer should mitigate the loss of open space through a formula-based fee that could generate several million dollars to be used only for open space acquisitions and parkland improvement.
- Development of the former Nesenger property in East Patchogue into a new, environmentally friendly, passive recreation park with a New York State Parks Grant.

### **Super Storm Sandy**

The Supervisor spoke of the early challenges to his administration, including the Town's recovery efforts in the aftermath of Super Storm Sandy. He mentioned that the Town is still in the process of rebuilding and that it will receive 75% from FEMA and possibly 12.5% from New York State, but stressed that the Town must bear the expenses upfront which were unanticipated and unbudgeted. He voiced his concern about continued flooding in low lying areas and the need to rebuild the dune system on the barrier beaches. He also made a commitment to continue working with FEMA and New York State to help residents rebuild their homes; to introduce legislation to streamline and expedite reconstruction and elevation of homes to prevent future flood damage; and to reduce tax assessments on homes that were damaged or destroyed.

### **Quality of Life**

In his address, Supervisor Romaine maintains his strong stance on protecting the quality of life for all Brookhaven residents by outlining steps he will take in the future, including:

- Urging New York State to enact laws to compel banks to maintain homes while they are in the foreclosure process to help avoid them from becoming neighborhood eyesores.
- Increasing fines, closing loopholes and increasing enforcement to get absentee landlords to comply with town codes.
- Targeting abandoned and unsafe buildings for demolition, which will raise property values.
- Taking advantage of incentives, such as land banks, to redevelop blighted strip malls, abandoned commercial properties and brownfields sites which will increase the tax base without the loss of open space.

### **Business Development and Job Creation**

Looking to the future, Supervisor Romaine stressed the importance of intelligent development throughout the Town, including:

- The Route 25A corridor from Mount Sinai to Wading River and the Middle Country Road corridor from Coram to Ridge.
- Blight-to-Light projects, the Forge River Management Plan, the Portion Road Land Use Plan
- A Carmans River protection Plan, a multi-family code, and The Transit Oriented Development plan for Ronkonkoma Hub.

He also applauded the work of the Town's Industrial; Development Agency (IDA) and the Brookhaven Business Advisory Council (BBAC) for their work to support and attract business into the Town and creating much needed jobs. In 2013, the IDA will be closing on \$25 million worth of projects that will create hundreds of jobs.

Finally, the Supervisor praised the "dedicated employees that help move the Town forward," and thanked them for their service. He vowed to create a more positive and professional atmosphere in Town government and enforce policies that prevent harassment, violence and political activity in the workplace. He also re-emphasized the Town's whistleblower policy and said that he will review the Town's Ethic Code.

In closing, Supervisor Romaine stated that his job is to overcome the challenges that face the town and to focus on "Moving Brookhaven Forward."

To read Supervisor Romaine's State of the Town address, visit [www.brookhaven.org](http://www.brookhaven.org).

### **Division of Public Information \* Office of the Supervisor**

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